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Sweating through game of cards

By Tech. Sgt. Michael Phillips
40th Air Expeditionary Group Public Affairs

"Right now, I'm at 15,541." And counting.

As he counted down the days before returning home, running up his push-up total had become a goal of Lt. Col. Jeff Sheppard, Grand Forks Air Force Base's operations support squadron commander, and the 28th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron Commander at a deployed location in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

What began as a challenge among several deployed Airmen had soon become what some would say bordered on obsession.

The "game" was simple enough.

Participants get together with a deck of playing cards. After the deck has been shuffled and cut, the first person draws the top card. The value of the card represents the number of push-ups the person is required to do. Face cards are assigned a value of 10 push-ups, with aces worth either one or 11, at the individual's choice. The game continues around the room until all the cards have been drawn and all the push-ups completed.

Simple enough until one realizes the game is played every duty day. And that as the deployment progressed, the number of push-ups would double, then triple the face value of the cards.

Oh, and those aces? They're no longer worth "one measly push-up."

"My involvement started with my predecessor, Lt. Col. Monty Perry, who's a commander at MacDill Air Force Base," said Colonel Sheppard. "I replaced him on the first of June and, I believe, he was doing it as part of the tanker squadron.

"Then Col. Eric Single, who was the group commander at the time, caught on to it, and we migrated it into Colonel Single's office. Over the weeks, people

realized it was happening at 2 p.m. every afternoon, and started joining in. It really turned into a fun thing."

While there are the basic rules, Colonel Sheppard points out that the rules can be, and have been, modified to suit the participants.

They started out slowly, going through the deck one time, using the face value of the cards. After a couple of weeks of 'playing' every day but Sunday, it had gotten easier. The group decided it was time to start 'upping the ante.'

"We decided the first card you draw, acts as double the face value. The next week, it was the first two cards," he said. "Before long, we'd gotten through the whole deck. Now what do we do? How do we raise the bar again?"

"So we decided, 'Cut the cards and triple the card you draw - before we even start the regular rounds.'

"Finally, we added a 'personal best' round." After the regular rounds, players do as many push-ups as they can in one minute.

"Now, we've started tripling the first four rounds," Colonel Sheppard said. "The average high for the day has gone from about 138 up to about 400.

"It's amazing to see the numbers add up as you get to the end of the rotation," Colonel Sheppard said, noting that several of the members of the original group have gotten into "the 12,000 range."

"When we started, 1st Lt. Heather Leite, 40th Expeditionary Communications Flight Commander, was only able to do about 20 push-ups 'knees-down,' and was struggling a bit with those," he said. "By the time she left, she was busting out 70, straight legged, as well as any of us."

"What I emphasize to people is that it's not how many you can do, it's the fun of doing it every day, and seeing your own personal improvement," Colonel Sheppard said. "And it's something I plan on taking it

back to my squadron."

Still building his total, Colonel Sheppard was "on the carpet" in the group commander's office before departing, where members of the commander's AEF 7 and 8 staff had just begun to take up the new tradition. Though the staff only recently took up the challenge, the rules have already changed, adding crunches along with the push-ups.

And the game began again.

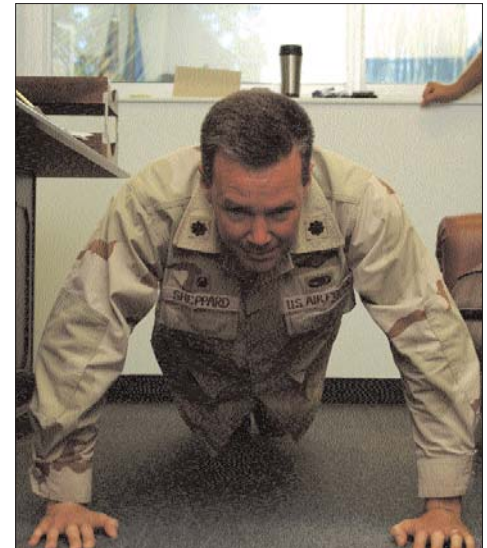


Photo by Tech. Sgt. Michael Phillips

Lt. Col. Jeff Sheppard, the deployed 319th Operations Support Squadron commander, knocked out another one of nearly 16,000 push-ups done during his recent deployment.

Healing, awareness through shirt displays

By Capt. Malaysia Gresham
Family advocacy

In recognition of National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the base family advocacy office and the 319th Medical Group recently brought the "Clothesline Project" to Grand Forks Air Force Base. The Clothesline Project is a visual display that calls



The Clothesline Project brings attention to the issue of violence against women.

attention to violence against women by displaying shirts designed by woman survivors of violence and their families and friends.

The project focuses on providing healing for survivors, educating the public about the issue and providing solutions through individual action to prevent violence.

Each shirt color has a designated significance: white - for victims who died because of violence, Red or pink - for survivors of rape or sexual assault, beige or yellow - for survivors of battery or abuse, green or blue - for survivors of child sexual abuse or incest and lavender or purple - for those attacked because of sexual orientation.

A person is battered in the United States every nine seconds, raped every minute and every day four people are murdered in the United States. Worse, three out of the 10 raped are under the age of 11 and six out of 10 are under the age of 18.

The American Medical Association has declared domestic violence an epidemic and the March of Dimes names battery as the number one cause of birth defects.

During the Vietnam War, 58,000 men were killed. In the same period of time, 51,000 women were killed in the United States by their supposed loved ones.

The project was displayed at the fitness center.

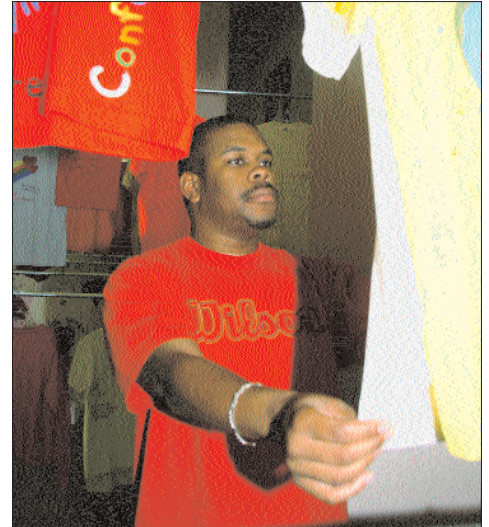


Photo by Airman 1st Class Ashley Coomes

Staff Sgt. Ronque Wright reads a shirt from the clothesline project in the base fitness center. The shirts promote awareness for domestic violence.

Get up, get out, get fit

By Airman 1st Class Ashley Coomes
Public affairs

The base youth center kicked off a "Fit Factor" program recently with a fun-thalon treating children to activities designed to stimulate interest and awareness of healthy lifestyles choices.

Fit Factor is a web-based fitness initiative launched by the Air Force for youth ages nine to 18. It is designed to encourage interaction and reward commitment.

Fit Factor offers five levels for youth to complete when they participate in physical activity. The levels are: energy, strength, agility, adventure and endurance. Points are earned and prizes awarded as participants accomplish each new level.

The program's intent is to integrate fitness

into Air Force youth programs to fight youth obesity. Saturday's events included the water balloon toss, basketball free throw and longest softball throw as well as a two-mile fun run. When participants finished the course, they received their first incentive, lip balm and a gel pen.

A healthy diet is also a part of fit factor, said Coach Michael Anthony. Points are also earned for healthy food decisions, such as eating the daily recommended amount of vegetables.

"The main goal is to get kids away from their computers and get them active. Being fit doesn't just mean being skinny; it includes flexibility, agility, and strength," said Coach Anthony.

Those interested in participating in Fit Factor can register online at www.afgetfit.com.



Base child Nick Carlson tosses a balloon to his teammate Jo Anna Givens during the water-balloon-toss relay.